

**SCIENTIFIC NOTE**  
**DISCINETUS MORATOR (COLEOPTERA: SCARABAEIDAE)**  
**FEEDING ON ROOTS OF AZALEAS**  
**(RHODODENDRON SPP.)<sup>1, 2</sup>**

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*Dyscinetus morator* (Fab.) (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae), a common scarab distributed from New York south to Florida and west to Texas and Mexico (Gordon & Anderson, 1981), is widely distributed in Maryland (Staines, 1986). The adults are attracted to lights and remain in the area of the lights during the day by hiding under available debris (Woodruff, 1970). *Dyscinetus morator* has been reported to attack rice, *Oryza sativa* L. (Anonymous, 1953); pangola grass pastures, *Digitaria decumbens* Stent. (Anonymous, 1956); caladium bulbs, *Caladium x hortulanum*, cranberry, *Vaccinium macrocarpon* Ait. (Woodruff, 1970); corn, *Zea mays* L. (Anonymous, 1980); carrot, *Daucus carota* L., radish, *Raphanus sativus* L., lettuce, *Lactuca sativa* L. (Foster *et al.*, 1986); and waterhyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes* (Mart.) Solms (Buckingham & Bennett, 1989). This species is associated with wet soils and marsh areas (Anonymous, 1980; Buckingham & Bennett, 1989).

On 2 August 1982, during a routine inspection of a commercial nursery in Baltimore County, Maryland there were discovered larvae, pupae, and teneral adults of an unknown scarab around the root zone of container-grown azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.). All life stages were abundant and root feeding was obvious on the azaleas. E. J. Ford, USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Baltimore (retired), identified the adults as *Dyscinetus morator*, the rice beetle.

The azalea growing area of this nursery was bounded on three sides by salt marsh. The azaleas were grown in containers and were maintained under damp conditions, thus providing a suitable habitat for the beetle. The production area was not lighted, so the infestation did not result from light-attracted adults. Adult beetles may have been attracted by the moist, high organic matter content of the potting mixture used by the nursery.

This is the first report of *Dyscinetus morator* colonizing a woody ornamental. Subsequent surveys in this nursery have failed to yield further populations of this beetle in azaleas, though the beetle is common outside of the growing area.

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